

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY KABUL
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CINCPAC

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, IN
SUBJECT: CHARAN SINGH ISSUE CONTINUES TO PERCOLATE ALONG

REF: NEW DELHI 10741

1. SUMMARY: ALTHOUGH FORMER UNION HOME MINISTER
CHARAN SINGH HAS REMAINED RELATIVELY QUIET IN THE
WEEK AND A HALF SINCE HE WITHDREW HIS LETTER OF
RESIGNATION FROM THE JANATA'S NATIONAL EXECUTIVE AND
PARLIAMENTARY BOARD, THE RULING PARTY'S TWO TOP
COUNCILS (REFTEL), THE CONTROVERSY CAUSED BY HIS
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ABRUPT DISMISSAL FROM THE GOVERNMENT AND
HIS EARLIER PUBLIC ATTACKS ON PRIME MINISTER
DESAI CONTINUES TO PERCOLATE ALONG. THE OPPOSITION,
PARTICULARLY THE CONTRASS (I), HAS SEIZED UPON CHARAN
SINGH'S CHARGES OF CORRUPTION "IN HIGH PLACES" AS AN
INSTRUMENT WITH WHICH TO ATTACK THE GOVERNMENT AND
DISRUPT PARLIAMENTARY PROCEEDINGS. WITHIN THE JANATA

ITSELF, THE BALANCE BETWEEN PRO-CHARAN SINGH AND PRO-MORARJI FORCES IS AT BEST DELICATE AND IN AN EFFORT TO AVERT EXACERBATING THE RIFTS WITHIN THE RULING PARTY THE JANATA HAS AGAIN POSTPONED ELECTIONS TO THE EXECUTIVE OF THE JANATA PARLIAMENTARY PARTY. ALTHOUGH THE CEASEFIRE ARRANGED IN EARLY JULY (SEE NEW DELHI 10401) SEEMS TO BE HOLDING AND THE SELF-DESIGNATED PEACEMAKERS CONTINUE THEIR EFFORTS, THE PRIME MINISTER REMAINS ADAMANT ON THE CHARAN SINGH ISSUE AND THE PROSPECTS FOR A TRUE RECONCILIATION BETWEEN THE TWO SENIORMOST LEADERS OF THE JANATA PART ARE QUESTIONABLE. END SUMMARY.

2. CHARAN SINGH AND HIS DEPUTY, FORMER HEALTH MINISTER RAJ NARAIN, HAVE REMAINED RELATIVELY QUIET SINCE THE DENOUEMENT OF THE CRISIS WHICH GRIPPED THE JANATA IN EARLY JULY. HOWEVER, THE OPPOSITION, PARTICULARLY THE CONGRESS (I), HAVE SEIZED UPON THE ALLEGATIONS RAISED BY THE OUSTED HOME MINISTER AND HAVE GIVEN EVERY INDICATION OF THEIR INTENTION TO CAPITALIZE UPON THEM. DURING THE FIRST WEEK OF PARLIAMENT'S MONSOON SESSION, AGITATED CONGRESS (I) MP'S, REPEATEDLY DISRUPTED PROCEEDINGS IN BOTH HOUSES TO DEMAND THE PRIME MINISTER'S EXPLANATION OF CHARAN SINGH'S CHARGES OF "CORRUPTION IN HIGH PLACES IN GOVERNMENT." SPECIFICALLY, THEY HAVE DEMANDED THAT MORARJI MAKE PUBLIC THE LETTERS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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HE EXCHANGED WITH CHARAN SINGH OVER THE LATTER'S ALLEGATION OF QUESTIONABLE BUSINESS PRACTICES BY THE PM'S ON KANTIBHAI. IN AN ANGRY MOOD, MORARJI HAS REFUSED TO DO SO ON THE GROUNDS THAT THIS CORRESPONDENCE WAS "SECRET" AND A PRIVATE MATTER BETWEEN HIMSELF AND HIS FORMER HOME MINISTER. ON THREE OCCASIONS LAST WEEK, PROTESTS BY CONGRESS (I) MP'S HAVE CAUSED THE ADJOURNMENT OF THE RAJY SABHA. EVEN THE OFFICIAL CONGRESS HAS JUMPED INTO THE FRAY AND DEMANDED THE RELEASE OF THE DESAI-CHARAN SINGH LETTERS.

3. WITHIN THE JANATA ITSELF A SOMEWHAT DELICATE AND UNEASY BALANCE CONTINUES BETWEEN THOSE SUPPORTING CHARAN SINGH AND THOSE LINED UP BEHIND THE PRIME MINISTER. THE PREVAILING MOOD SEEMS TO BE AIMED AT AVOIDING ANY STEP WHICH COULD UPSET THAT BALANCE. TO THIS END, PEACEMAKERS LATE LAST WEEK SOUGHT TO POSTPONE THE SCHEDULED JULY 21 ELECTIONS TO THE EXECUTIVE OF THE JANATA PARLIAMENTARY PARTY, THE ORGANIZATION COMPRISING ALL JANATA MP'S IN PARLIAMENT. THEY FEARED THAT MANY OF CHARAN SINGH'S CANDIDATES FOR JPP POSTS WOULD BE DEFEATED BY CANDIDATES HAVING ALLEGIANCE TO MORARJI. SUCH

A RESULT WOULD DEMONSTRATE CHARAN SINGH'S WEAKNESS IN THE PARTY AND COULD FURTHER HUMILIATE AND ANTAGONIZE HIM. IN AN ACRIMONIOUS MEETING OF THE JPP EXECUTIVE ON JULY 21, FOREIGN MINISTER VAJPAYEE REPORTEDLY DIFFERED WITH THE PRIME MINISTER OVER THIS ISSUE, VAJPAYEE ARGUING THAT TO DELAY THE JPP ELECTIONS WOULD ALLOW THE WOUNDS CAUSED BY CHARAN SINGH'S DISMISSAL TO HEAL. ALTHOUGH MORARJI ARGUED IN FAVOR OF GOING AHEAD WITH THE POLL, HE ULTIMATELY RELENTED AND THE PARLIAMENTARY PARTY ELECTIONS HAVE BEEN POSTPONED UNTIL MAY OF NEXT YEAR.

4. THE JPP ISSUE ASIDE, OTHER PEACEMAKING EFFORTS CONTINUE, LED BY THE SO-CALLED "GROUP OF FIVE" MINISTERS: VAJPAYEE, INDUSTRY MINISTER FERNANDES, STEEL MINISTER PATNAIK, COMMERCE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MINISTER MOHAN DHARIA AND INFORMATION MINISTER ADVANI. ON JULY 17 THEY SUCCEEDED IN ARRANGING A MEETING BETWEEN THE PM AND CHARAN SINGH, THE FIRST SUCH MEETING SINCE MORARJI'S RETURN TO DELHI FROM THE U.S. ON JUNE 17. HOWEVER, THERE ARE APPARENTLY AT PRESENT NO PLANS FOR FURTHER MEETINGS BETWEEN THE TWO. MOREOVER, OUR SOURCES HERE CONTINUE TO TELL US THAT MORARJI IS IN A FEISTY AND ADAMANT MOOD AND WILL NOT CONSIDER A RECONCILIATION WITH CHARAN SINGH UNTIL THE LATTER WITHDRAWS HIS ALLEGATIONS ABOUT KANTIBHAT'S ACTIVITIES. ONLY THEN WOULD HE CONSIDER READMITTING CHARAN SINGH INTO THE CABINET. AT THE SAME TIME RENEWED RUMBLINGS ARE COMING FROM CHARAN SINGH'S CAMP. WITHIN THE NEXT WEEK RAJ NARAIN REPORTEDLY PLANS TO MAKE A STATEMENT IN PARLIAMENT ON HIS VERSION OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES LEADING TO HIS OUSTER AS HEALTH MINISTER. IN ADDITION, SOME OF CHARAN SINGH'S SUPPORTERS ARE REPORTEDLY ONCE AGAIN DISCUSSING THE HOLDING OF A "KISAN" (PEASANT) RALLY IN DELHI TO DEMONSTRATE THE FORMER HOME MINISTER'S CLOUT IN THE HINDI BELT. THUS, AT THE MEMENT THE TRUCE ARRANGED EARLIER THIS MONTH IS STILL HOLDING, BUT WE BELIEVE THAT THE PROSPECTS FOR A TRUE RECONCILIATION BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER AND CHARAN SINGH ARE AT BEST QUESTIONABLE. GOHEEN

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